

A Once and Future Destiny

by Old Man Panda

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Summary: As one chapter of his life ends can Bengal Tiger finally accept his destiny?

1. A Wound With No Defence

Disclaimer: The X-men, Shadowcat, Nightcrawler, and Rogue all belong to Marvel. Bengal Tiger belongs to Broadsword comics used with permission. "Breakfast at Tiffany's" is somehow connected to Deep Blue Something or their record label. This is part one in an on going story arc I call "A Once and Future Destiny". I hope you enjoy.

Comments are loved flames are given to Marrow.

>
Chapter One

>
A Wound With No Defense

>
Ching...ching...ching...

>
In my life, I have been hit with bullets, energy blasts, superhuman fists, and a large jack-in-the-box. None of those came close to causing me as much pain as the small locket bouncing off my chest just did.

>
"Do you hear me Smith? I don't need you telling me what to do! Get your own fucking life and stay out of mine," she shouts at me.

>
She is Kitty Pryde, my best friend and girlfriend.

>
At least she was thirty seconds ago.

>
I look at her. Summoning every last erg of strength, I looked at her and just responded dully, "As you wish Katherine." I turned and headed upstairs to my room, the shock of her words hitting everyone else in the room like a giant sledgehammer.

>
I walk into my room and a small sigh escapes my lips. The mansion had finally just begun to feel like home. I moved to my closet and pulled out a couple of steamer trunks.

>
My mind is in such turmoil that I didn't notice someone outside my door until I heard the knock.

>
"Come in Rogue," I said.

>
"You okay Sugar?" Rogue asked hesitantly as she entered my room.

>
"No, but what choice do I have?" I say as I began to pack.

>
"What are you doing?" she questioned, already knowing the answer.

>
"I've got to get out of here. You know me: always do what's best for the team. Right now it's for the best that I leave. You'll be okay. The new kid is working out," I answered conversationally as I packed some of my favorite clothes.

>
"You don't have to go. We'll figure something out," she offered, picking up my old teddy bear.

>
"Rogue, don't make this harder than it is already. Except when the Maurders hurt me, I've been fighting since I was thirteen. I need a break. Maybe find myself," I glanced at her, hoping that she would understand.

>
"Okay, Sugar. Take as much time as you need. There'll always be a place for you here," she offered, putting a gloved hand on my shoulder.

>
"Thanks boss lady," I say and she leaves me to finish.

>
I finish in a depressingly short amount of time. Outside of being an X-man, there is little else in my life. Everything I need is packed into two steamer chests. With a few instructions, I forward all my computer files to the computer in my New York apartment.

>
With a trunk under each arm, I made my way downstairs to my car. Seated on the hood of my car was Kurt.

>
"Hey 'Elf," I murmured noncommittally.

>
"John, I'm sorry. I don't know what to do. Both you and Kitty are as dear to me as my own flesh and blood," Kurt began with a look of anguish.

>
"Listen Fuzzy...Kurt. I'll be okay. She needs your help more than I do. She's in pain. I don't know what's hurting her, but the pain is there. Help her. Even if we don't end up together again, I want her to be happy," I told him as I put the chests in the back seat.

>
"Ja, mein freund. I will still worry about you. After all, what are 'big brothers' for?" Kurt asked gently as he hugged me.

>

>
"Thanks Kurt. I'll be back, I promise," I told him as I broke the hug and got in the car.

>
"Geh mit Gott, mein freund," he said with a sad smile.

>
"Danke gleichfalls unscharf Elf," I replied. *

>
As I pulled out I, gave Kurt and the mansion one last look. Not wanting to be alone with my thoughts, I turned the radio on. Almost instantly I regretted it as I was bombarded with Deep Blue Something's "Breakfast at Tiffany's".

>
Even as I turned the radio off, the lyrics rushed into my thoughts. Damn photographic memory. I head towards the interstate and eventually New York City...and maybe a little peace for a change.

>
*Go with God my friend.

>
The same to you fuzzy elf.

2. Sister's, Twerp's, and Perp's Oh My

Chapter Two

>
 Sisters, Twerps, and Perps, Oh My!

>
God I hate New York City traffic. Without thinking, I managed to wind up in the middle of Friday rush hour traffic. You think the horns blaring are bad, try listening to all of it with enhanced hearing sometime. It is no picnic. I turned on the radio, hoping for

some good news. The damn Yankees shut my Mariners out, 5-0. I turned the station and what do I hear? A shock jock talking about the "mutant menace".

>

>
I quickly turn the radio off in disgust. How could the Yankees shut out my boys for God's sake!? I chuckle to myself. At least I have my priorities right.

>

>
New York smells different. It's that new paint smell. Like someone who has just bought an old, run-down house and slapped on a new coat of paint to make it seem new. But the old memories are there. I can still smell the old memories. Below these streets the Morlocks died and I was gravely wounded.

>

>
I pull into the covered lot and parked in my space. I cut the engine and get out, making a show of dragging the steamer chests to the elevator. Even coming in the back way, I have to make sure no one sees me performing feats of superhuman strength. I hate it sometimes; pretending that I am not a mutant.

>

>
After lugging my chests to the elevator, I hit the button that will take me to my floor. I resist the urge to summon my sword to me and hack up the speakers pumping out a horrid elevator musak version of Clapton's "Layla". The door opened and I lugged the two steamer chests, which I could really lift easily, down the hall. As I turned the corner I was greeted by a voice I should have expected.

>

>
"Hey Sweetpea, you need help?" comes the voice of one Veronica Merrill, also known as Nightingale.

>
"No, I got 'em. So, the Elf called?" I asked, my voice sounding more tired than I thought.

>

>
"Of course. You know Kurt. He sounded worried, kiddo. Do we need to talk?" she questioned, leaning against my door.

>

>
"Not tonight 'neechan. I need to be alone. How about lunch tomorrow? I'll cook and we can talk. I just need to have tonight to myself," I explained.

>

>
"Okay, that's fair. But tomorrow we will discuss this. Right?" she asked pointedly.

>

>
"Hai 'neechan, hai. And 'neechan...thanks for checking in on me," I admitted.

>

>
She walked over and enveloped me in a big hug. "Hey, what else are big sister types for? Take care tonight Sweetpea," she said, leaning up to kiss my forehead.

>

>
I watched her go to the elevator. As she got on, she gave me a little wave. She's worried. To be honest, she has every right to worry. One year, nine months, five days, six hours, eighteen minutes, and an odd number of seconds ago, I stopped drinking. I know Ronnie and all of my other friends must be keeping their fingers crossed tonight. Hoping tonight won't be the night that my drinkless streak ends.

>

>
Well, they can stop worrying. I intend for this streak to crush Ripken's consecutive game streak. I won't let what happened tonight ruin that. I owe a big part of being sober to Kitty. I won't go back

to what I was because she dumped me.

>

>
As quickly as I packed the trunks, I unpack them. I turned on my computer, checking if the files I forwarded all made it. I also check the stock market. Bio-Technic is up two points. Well, there's at least a little good news for the day.

>

>
I sat down and realized two things: first, I hadn't eaten since breakfast. Second, there was no food in my apartment. Grabbing the yellow pages, I flipped through to find the closest pizza place; not an easy thing in New York. As I reached for the phone, it rang.

>

>
"Jeez Smith, whatcha do to piss her off?" demanded the distinct voice of Jubilee.

>

>
"Not tonight firecracker. Still hurts," I warned wearily.

>

>
"'Kay big guy. But don't think for a sec that this is over. Just one thing; you okay?" she asked, concern creeping into her voice.

>

>
"No, but I'm surviving. Jubes, I promise, no drinking. I know that's somewhere in that little demented thing you call a mind," I cracked weakly, trying to lighten the mood.

>

>
"I know you're not John. I trust ya," she confided.

>

>
I believe her.

>

>
"Take care, Twerp. We'll talk tomorrow, 'kay?" I offered.

>

>
"Gotcha big guy, Take care," she told me, then hung up.

>

>
I inhaled deeply after hanging up the phone. As I did, I found myself picking up the sharp, hazy scent of fire. "It's not your problem, Smith. You're on vacation. The authorities will handle it," I reminded myself.

>

>
But apparently my subconscious had other ideas. As I tried to talk myself out of going into action, I had walked into my bedroom and removed my costume from the back of the closet. I stared at it for a good ten seconds as the smell of smoke got stronger. The fire had to be close by. That was the final straw. I put my costume on, and as I did, I became Bengal Tiger once more.

>

>
Bengal Tiger doesn't have time to worry about failed relationships. He exists for only one thing: protect those who can't protect themselves. Using skills learned from Logan, Kitty, and Ronnie, I made my way out of my apartment undetected. I headed to the roof. I have no idea why I did, it just felt like a superhero thing to do.

>

>
From the roof I could see the plumes of smoke billowing up from a building only five blocks away. I started to run, leaping from rooftop to rooftop. Using that little bit of advice from Dr. McCoy, I made good time and got to the fire in a good three minutes.

>
A sense of dread filled me. The building on fire was a hospital.

Memories flashed behind my eyes in rapid succession, making me vaguely sick. Shortly before the whole Magneto power play against the UN, the X-Men had helped rescue babies from a hospital that had been torched by an arsonist. They have yet to capture the person responsible.

>
Memories fade and my body jumped into the present, and into action. I leaped from the rooftop I was perched on to the roof of the hospital. I pulled out a portable oxygen mask out of my belt and forced myself into the rooftop doors. From the outside, it had appeared that the fire was on the lower levels. I could only hope that the people there had been evacuated. I headed downstairs as fast as I could, straining my ears for sounds of people still in the hospital. The second floor I made it to had sounds of life. I threw open the door and raced towards the source of those sounds.

>
Once again I found myself in a maternity ward during a fire. Nurses were trying to get all the babies together so they could escape. My senses told me the fire was spreading quickly and our escape route had been cut off. I could only imagine what I must have looked like emerging from the smoke; a man with a strange costume and a sword. One of the nurses screamed.

>
"Please listen. I'm a good guy. I'm here to help. Where is the nearest window?" I asked trying to sound reassuring as I absently clipped the mask back into place at my hip.

>

>
"It's too far. We can't get all these babies there quick enough," one of the nurses pointed out, panic marring what would normally be a lovely voice.

>

>
"Well, if the Bengal can't go to the window, the window will come to Bengal. That's me by the way," I explained at the looks of confusion.

>

>
I pulled Excalibur from its sheath and headed to the nearest wall that I figured lead outside. I stabbed the ancient blade through the wall and proceeded to cut our own door from the concrete. As I finished cutting, I punched my hands into the wall that I had just carved into and grabbed it to pull the now-useless section of building out of the way. A strange mixture of smoke and fresh air hit my lungs.

>

>
"Start bringing the babies over here. I'll try to get their attention down there," I said to the nurses. Oddly enough, a chunk of wall being obviously cut out and removed had caught someone's attention down below. A fire truck extended its ladder up to us. I thanked God that this hospital wasn't very high. "Go; get you and as many babies out as you can. I'll get the rest," I yelled over the growing din of the fire.

>

>
The nurses, each with a baby, went in order down the ladder. There had been six nurses and eight babies. The final two would be my responsibility. I carefully took a baby under each arm. As I moved toward the hole and the ladder, I became aware that we were not alone.

>

>
"Here kiddies, come out, come out wherever you are. Come on, boys and girls, uncle Hi* wants to play with you. Who are you?" demanded the owner of the voice as he saw my charges and I preparing to leave.

>

>
He was a strange sight in the midst of an inferno. Flame red hair fell playfully in front of his eyes. He was wearing a t-shirt with the image Jim Morrison on the front, short jean shorts and old hightops.

>

>
"Not again. You damn...who ever you are, spoiled my fun the last time," he pouted, looking terribly child-like in the hazy light.

>

>
Years of experience told me that this was the perp; that and the fact that the smoke was not affecting him in the least. I found myself torn between two lines of action: get the perp, or rescue the babies. In the end it proved to be no contest. I turned and headed down the ladder. As I picked my way down the ladder, my final vision of the man was him throwing a temper tantrum.

>

>
Once I reached the ground, EMTs raced up to take the babies. One also came to check me out. I waved him off and started to leave when a hand grabbed my shoulder.

>

>
"Oh no, boy. You're going to tell me what the hell just happened," a deep female voice commanded.

>

>
"Of course, Officer...Harris," I complied, sneaking a quick glance at her name pin. "I'm more than happy to help. Just...could we go somewhere without the lights and cameras?" I requested somewhat tiredly.

>

>
She looked at me for a second, seemingly sizing me up. Then she led me to away from the camera crew. From there, I proceeded to tell her everything, only omitting that I just happened to live nearby. "I thought you spandex types always went after the bad guy," she commented after I finished my story.

>

>
"I won't lie to you, I did think about it. But those two kids' lives were in my hands. In the end that mattered more," I admitted to her.

>

>
"Nice to hear. A superhero more interested in helping then fighting," she commented with a rather pretty smile.

>

>
"Well, we try sometimes. Oh, and if you could, try to keep my name out of the news? I'm more than happy to let you guys take all the credit," I offered.

>

>
"That could be a bit difficult. I saw a few of the nurses already talking with the news crews. Why? I thought you guys loved publicity," she remarked, sounding a bit sarcastic.

>

>
"Depends on who you are. The Avengers and FF are great for publicity. People like me on the other hand...well, let's just say we aren't as well loved," I replied, trying to keep the bitter note of reality from my voice.

>

>
"You're a mutant; one of the X-Men if the big X on your belt means anything. Well, I don't care if you're a mutant or a guy made of bricks. You did good today. What's your name?" she asked.

>

>
"Bengal Tiger, and you're only partially right. I'm on vacation from the X-Men," I told her with a crooked smile.

>

>
"Funny way of showing it, Bengal Tiger. Well, I have to say I'm glad you decided to vacation here. You saved lives today. My name is Lily Harris; here's my card. You need anything, or find any leads on this case, call me. I'm hoping I found a hero I can respect that isn't all worried about fame and cosmic threats," she said, handing me a card.

>

>
"Thanks Detective Harris. I'll try to be in touch," I told her, then began to take off into the shadows.

>

>
"Don't let me down, Bengal Tiger," she sighed under her breath.

>

>
I stuck to the shadows until I found a fire escape and made my way back to the rooftops. I quickly headed back to my place using the same ninjitsu technique I used to leave without a trace, climbing back into the window. To my shock, someone was standing in my living room.

>

>
"Hello, Cous. I'm Robin Goodfellow, at your service," the man greeted jovially with a bow.

>

>
"Oh boy."

>

>
*Japanese for "fire", pronounced "he".

3. You Can Choose Your Friends

Ch. 3

>
You can choose your enemies

>
"You're who?" I asked the man standing in my living room. He stood roughly my height, his long brown hair hanging roguishly over his face, framing his deep blue eyes. A light blue shirt clung to a small frame and led down to a pair of faded jeans.

>
"Robin Goodfellow. Jeez, John, I thought you had good hearing," he quipped.

>
"Whoa! How do you know my name, Robin? Or whoever you are," I shot back.

>
"We all your know your name, John. You're quite famous, at least in my circles," he replied nonchalantly, making himself comfortable on my couch.

>
"Circles? What circles?" I asked becoming more and more confused as our conversation progressed.

>
"You don't know, do you? Here I thought you were smart, Cous. The Seelie Court. You know; Oberon, Titania...all that fun stuff," he responded, waving his hands playfully.

>
For a second I wanted to tell him, "yeah, right." Then I started thinking. In my life, I had met several Norse gods and even Hercules. Why not the Puck? God, where was Ronnie when I needed her? She's the Shakespeare expert.

>
"Okay, so then why I am I famous in the Seelie court," I questioned.

>
"Well, I could tell, but that would take all the fun out of it," he mocked, his smile growing wider.

>
I sighed. "What is it you want from me?" I asked, trying to multi-task by keeping my temper and get somewhere with him.

>
"That, I can answer, Cous. I'm here to help you apprehend Hi."

>
"He who?" I asked back, somehow becoming even more confused.

>
"Hi, not He...Okay. Hi, with an i, is what we call an Unseelie Fae. Have you heard of the Fae at least?"

>
"Fae...you mean fairies?"

>
"We HATE it when you humans call us that," he snapped irritably, ignoring the look of apology I was trying to send him, hoping he would continue. "We are Fae. Now, there are the Seelie, like myself. We are the...happy-go-lucky ones. When we play with humans, it's mostly harmless. Then there are the Unseelie Fae. They're your goblins, trolls, and other nasties. Our friend Hi is one of those. I've been sent to help you stop him."

>
"Who...never mind. You won't tell me who sent you, will you?" I asked. He shook his head, the toothy grin still disturbingly wide on his thin face. "Okay, why is Hi here? What does he want?"

>
"He needs children. Human children. He must collect thirteen children by the next full moon. I know, I know...sounds trite, but it's true. Thirteen pure souls must be sacrificed on that night," he explained, leaning back so that it appeared that he was actually melting into the deep gray suede behind him. "If he succeeds, he will have the power to make his utmost wish, to light the world aflame. Now I like a good fire as much as the next guy, but that's a tad ridiculous. We of the Seelie Court don't want this to happen. You as a human and a superhero don't want this to happen. Ergo, we work together to stop Hi in his tracks." He actually looked serious for almost a second.

>
I shook my head for a second, trying to comprehend exactly what Robin was saying. This man wanted to kill thirteen children and then burn the world. No matter what personal turmoil I was going through, I had to stop this. "Let me get a hold of the X-Men, they'll be willing to help, or the Arisen." I offered as I headed toward the phone.

>
"Nope. Gotta be just you and me, my dear cous," Robin interjected, seemingly stretching his arm over to place his hand over the phone. "Those are the rules, and don't blame me, I didn't make them. And before you ask, even I can't break these rules."

>
He didn't look at all happy disclosing that fact. I nodded.

"Fine, Robin. So what's the plan?" I asked with a sigh.

>
"Good question...what's the plan?" he solicited with a shit-eating grin.

>
"I knew it wouldn't be that easy..." I muttered as I slumped into a chair near him, rubbing a grimy hand over my eyes.

>
"You'll do great, Cous; we all have faith in you. Well, I'll let you get some sleep. Give some thought to our great plan. Hi shouldn't strike for a few days, even with your interference. I'll...pop in tomorrow evening. Till then, dear cous." With a bow he disappeared from my apartment.

>
Great, now had some new quest from the Seelie Fae. I was being forced to team up with Robin freaking Goodfellow. And I still haven't had anything to eat!

End
file.